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William T. Kendall to Senator James O. Eastland, 4 June 1975

William Thomas Kendall

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Recommended Citation

Kendall, William Thomas, "William T. Kendall to Senator James O. Eastland, 4 June 1975" (1975). *Eastland Correspondence: Ford Administration*. 42.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 4, 1975

*white House
file*

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in further response to the April 18 letter from you and several of your colleagues.

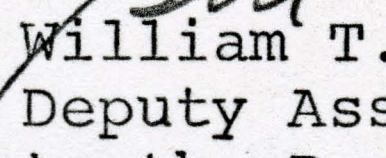
As you know, the problem of the fire ant has been a matter of concern to several recent Administrations. This Administration and its predecessors have recognized the difficulties that this pest has caused for people and agriculture in the affected areas. For the fiscal years 1969-1975, more than \$50.5 million has been appropriated so that the fire ant could be brought under control. During recent years, the Environmental Protection Agency, in carrying out a mission which we fully support, has ordered restrictions on the use of the pesticide which is the least hazardous available means to eliminate the ant. Difficulties in striking a reasonable balance between these two objectives -- controlling the fire ant and protecting the environment -- have resulted in a program which is both costly and relatively ineffective.

The action by the Secretary of Agriculture, announcing his intent to suspend the program effective June 30, has brought this complex and troubling issue into focus. We believe that the dialogue between the two agencies and other interested parties which has been stimulated by the Secretary's announcement will bring about an early resolution of this important issue. If so, the people of the infested areas can be assured of a program which is both effective and environmentally sound. If not, it would be inappropriate to continue to spend public funds on a program which provides only temporary relief.

The President has asked the Domestic Council to monitor the efforts of EPA and USDA as they seek a solution. The welfare of the people in the infested areas, and in the areas to which the ant may spread, depends on prompt and responsible action.

I hope this information will be useful to you.

Sincerely,


William T. Kendall
Deputy Assistant
to the President

The Honorable James O. Eastland
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510